

PDEA SCOPING PROCEDURES (For Widening and New Location Projects)

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NOTES AND DEFINITIONS

Notes:

- The Scoping Procedures are written for both widening and new location TIP highway projects.
- Do not use for bridge projects. Bridge projects will follow another set of procedures for Scoping.
- **Scoping meetings will be held for all in-house and consultant projects.**
- The Scoping Procedures are written specifically for in-house projects; however, they can be used for consultant projects too.
- The Scoping Procedures have been re-written to better reflect the document prep network in Pmii. All steps to the procedures are either an activity in PMii or an element within an activity.
- The Scoping Procedures consist of five items:
 1. Step-by-Step Procedures
 2. Scoping Information Sheets (sheets 1-5)
 3. Sample Letters and Memos – see Pam Rogers for typing & merging the letters/memos
 4. List of Environmental agencies we deal with regularly
 5. NCDOT staff that are part of the Scoping process

Definitions of Meetings and Letters:

Scoping: a formal process that determines the scope of issues to be addressed for planning a project. It identifies the significant issues related to the proposed project.

Project Initiation Meeting: A small initial meeting with key NCDOT staff to transfer project history and pertinent information to PDEA staff to help begin the Scoping process. At this meeting, the area of study is first identified and the type of traffic forecast is determined.

Start of Study Letter: A letter that officially initiates the coordination process between NCDOT-PDEA and groups outside NCDOT. This letter solicits input from federal, state (including state clearinghouse), and local government agencies.

Scoping Meeting: A formal meeting with NCDOT staff to solicit input from each Branch/ Unit for the proposed project. The goal of the meeting is to fully develop the scope of work that is required by the proposed action. It is documented with minutes.

Scoping Memo: A memo that is sent to NCDOT staff to invite them to the Scoping meeting and to solicit input from their Branch/ Unit.

PDEA SCOPING STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURES

A. Project Initiation Meeting

SIX to eight months prior to setting up a Scoping meeting, the PDEA Project Development Engineer should first schedule a project initiation meeting to begin collecting information about the proposed project. This meeting should include representatives from the Transportation Planning Branch (TPB), Roadway Design Branch, Congestion Management, Division, and the consultant (if applicable). A local representative, such as the City Manager, may also be invited. The PDEA engineer will coordinate with the TPB Group Supervisor (according to region) to provide contact names for TPB. The topics to be discussed at this meeting should include:

- Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) or Thoroughfare Plan (TPB will provide a copy of the CTP/Thoroughfare Plan Study Report and a copy of the Plan)
 - Status – complete, currently in update, outdated, etc.
 - Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update schedule (for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)) – including lapse date
 - Local development patterns (information used to develop CTP/thoroughfare plan)
 - Local issues that arose during development of CTP/thoroughfare plan – concerns or support for project implementation
 - Environmental issues considered during development of CTP/thoroughfare plan
- Air quality status (non-attainment; maintenance; or attainment for Ozone, PM2.5 or CO)
 - horizon year(s) – when project is expected to be complete
 - recommended cross section in conformity determination
 - conformity schedule and lapse date
- Unique characteristics of the local area/project vicinity
- Traffic forecasting tool(s) used to develop CTP/thoroughfare plan – travel demand model (TDM), hand allocation method, trend line analysis, etc. and assumptions that were included in the development
- Traffic projections that are readily available – information in the study report (daily link volumes or other information that may be useful prior to the project traffic forecast).

- Discuss potential detour routes and determine if traffic projections will be needed for these routes
 - Problem statement (system-level purpose and need)
 - Scoping Process Schedule
 - Role PDEA would like for TPB to take in Scoping Process
 - Whether or not the facility is identified as a Strategic Highway Corridor
 - Other information
 - TPB may be able to provide information about who's who in the community and key groups that should be involved
 - PDEA may be able to provide insight into the priority of the project to the Department (let TPB know up front that this is high profile) or other special needs they foresee during project development
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B. Apply Merger 01 Guidelines

Follow the Merger 01 Screening Process as outlined in the Merger 01 Process guidelines to determine if project will need to follow the Merger 01 Process. Establish the team if needed. Adjust PMii schedule accordingly.

C. Initial Requests

After the Project Initiation Meeting, make sure the following information is requested. The goal is to have the information received back for the Scoping meeting. Other groups within NCDOT complete some of the information. Provide project maps as needed to accompany the request. Coordinate these requests with your Group Leader. Refer to other guidelines (PDEA "green" book) for more details on making these requests:

1. Preliminary Engineering (PE) Funding – This funding is required so you can charge time to the project. Send a request to Calvin Leggett in Program Development Branch. ***Note: your Group Leader usually completes this.***

2. Feasibility Study – Request a copy of the study from Program Development Branch, Feasibility Studies Unit.
3. Traffic Forecast – Send a request to Deborah Hutchings in Transportation Planning Branch (as determined in Section A, Project Initiation Meeting). The request form can be found at the following website location: www.ncdot.org/planning/tpb/planning/forecast.html. The Word document is titled, “Request for Project Level Traffic Forecast.” Decide if potential detour routes should have traffic projections.
4. Aerial Photography – Send a request to Keith Johnston in Photogrammetry Unit. **Note: your Group Leader usually completes this.**
5. Crash Data – Send a request to Traffic Safety Systems Management Unit. The request form can be found at the following website location: <http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/traffic/Safety/>
6. Purpose and Need Statement – Send a request to Transportation Planning Branch contact (as determined in Section A, Project Initiation Meeting).
7. Geotechnical Information – send a request to Njoroge Wainaina in the Geotechnical Engineering Unit.
8. Community Characteristics Report – send a request to PDEA – Human Environment Office.

D. Send Start of Study Letters & Initial Scoping Information Sheets

SIX to eight months prior to setting up a Scoping meeting, the PDEA Project Development Engineer should send Start of Study Letters.

D1 – Start of Study Letters

Send Start of Study Letter to the Board Members and to environmental agencies. This letter will include the project description, the TIP right of way and let schedules and the type of documentation anticipated for the project. The recommended response date should allow approximately 45 calendar days for review. The letter does not include details about the meeting date, but requests that the agency representatives contact the project engineer if they would like to attend the meeting. The initial Scoping Information Sheets accompany this letter (see next section).

Note 1: Coordinate with Pam Rogers about typing this letter. She has the up-to-date template of the letter. She will merge the letters.

Note 2: Coordinate with your supervisor regarding the final list of agencies that should be contacted. Some agencies are always contacted, but others are only contacted for special circumstances. Get the official list of agencies from Pam.

D2 – Initial Scoping Information Sheets

Initial Scoping Information Sheets will be sent with the letters. Requested information (as outlined in Section C) may not be available for use in completing the initial Scoping Sheets to agencies; therefore, use information gathered from the feasibility study and from conversations with Roadway Design and the TPB.

Note: For the agency letters, do not include Sheets 5 and 6 of the Scoping Sheets. This information will be added in final version of the Scoping Sheets that is sent to NCDOT staff only.

Sheet 1 – General Project Information

1. List the TIP Project No., WBS No., Federal Aid No., Division, and County for the subject project.
2. List the date the Scoping Information Sheets are sent out in the “Sent Date” box.
3. In the future, if revisions are made to any of the information listed on the Scoping Information Sheets after the sheets are mailed, list the date that the revisions are mailed in the “Revision Date” box.
4. List the date the Scoping meeting will be held in the “Meeting Date” box. If the date is uncertain, then type ***“TBD”***.
5. Project Description – list the description of the project as shown in the TIP. Discuss the “logical termini” issue with FHWA if the project is federally funded.
6. General Project Need – list the need/reason for project.
7. MPO/Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Area – list the MPO or RPO if applicable.
8. NEPA-404 Merger Candidate – check appropriate box – check ***“maybe”*** if unsure.

9. Feasibility Study - list the completion date of the Feasibility Study if applicable.
10. List the type of environmental documentation anticipated (DEIS, EIS, ROD, EA, FONSI, CE, PCE, SMC, etc.) and scheduled approval date(s). Coordinate this with the PMii schedule.
11. List Right of Way and Construction let dates. Coordinate with the PMii schedule.
12. List the air quality status; i.e., is this project in an attainment, non-attainment, or maintenance area? (This information will come from the Transportation Planning Branch.)
13. List the horizon year that the project is assumed to be complete in the Long Range Transportation Plan. (This information will come from the Transportation Planning Branch.)

Sheet 2 – Design Criteria/Information

14. List the length of the project. You can put **“NA”** if project is not linear (interchange).
15. List the type of access control along the existing facility and the type of control for the proposed project (full, limited, partial, no control).
16. Structure inventory – list the type of existing structures (bridge or culvert) located along proposed project – also list sufficiency rating if available.
17. List the Functional Classification of the existing facility.
18. Identify if the project is located on a Strategic Highway Corridor (see Section A, Project Initiation Meeting with TPB). If so, include what the **“vision”** for the facility is.
19. List the CTP/ Thoroughfare Plan Designation of the proposed project (if any).
20. Roadway Typical Section – list the existing and proposed typical section.
21. Conformity Determination – if the project is in a non-attainment or maintenance area, check to see if the proposed typical section is consistent with the conformity determination (see Section A, Project Initiation Meeting with TPB) by answering “yes” or “no”.
22. Right of Way – list the existing and proposed right of way width.

23. List the existing posted speed limit and the proposed design speed.
24. List the current and design year traffic of the proposed facility – if traffic volumes vary over the length of the project, give a range – also list the % TTST (tractor trailers semi trucks), % Dual (dual trucks), and the % DHV (Design Hourly Volume).
25. Indicate if AASHTO or 3R design standards will be used.
26. Railroad Involvement – List the following information (if available) only if the project is expected to encroach on railroad right of way:
 - Is the existing railroad an overpass or underpass?
 - Will project involve a detour or other track work?
 - For at-grade crossings, state whether the existing RR crossing will be closed, widened, or if the project will require a new RR at-grade crossing.
 - Will the project require new or updated railroad signals? If so, with or without arms?
27. List the TIP right of way, construction and total cost estimates. If updated right of way and construction cost estimates are available, list estimates next to “Current Estimate.”

Sheet 3 – Vicinity & USGS Quad Mapping

28. Insert the vicinity map in this location.

Sheet 4 –USGS Quad Mapping

29. Insert the USGS Quad map in this location. Include the name of the USGS Quad.

Sheet 5 – Environmental Information

30. List any environmental information that may be important on this page. Include known streams, historic properties, community issues, etc. For the final versions of the sheet, insert any comments received from agencies.

Sheet 6 – Cost Estimate

31. Insert the cost estimate provided by the Project Services Unit – Preliminary Estimates Squad. This information is not received until Step E. This information is not included in the initial Scoping Information Sheets for the agencies, but will be added when sending to NCDOT staff (see Step G).
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E. Request Cost Estimate

Send a request to Doug Lane in the Preliminary Estimates Section of the Project Services Unit. The request will be a memo or e-mail with the attached initial version of the Scoping Information Sheets. Doug Lane will provide a detailed breakdown of the construction cost estimate in table form.

F. Set Scoping Meeting Date and Place

(The order of contacting individuals may differ among engineers)

1. The engineer will wait for responses from the Start of Study Letters, construction cost estimate from the Project Services Unit, and the other initial requests before scheduling the Scoping meeting. Some information will take 6 months or more to receive.

Note: Decide what information is pertinent for the Scoping meeting before scheduling it.

2. Schedule the meeting at least 4 to 6 weeks before the meeting date.
3. Establish a “window” of available dates based on FHWA, Unit Head, Group Leader, Roadway Design Project Engineer, and Project Development engineer’s schedules.
4. Check the Concurrence Meeting calendar for conflicts.
5. Check calendars for holidays and special events which may conflict with meeting date.
6. Check the availability of conference rooms. Check PDEA electronic calendar to determine any conflicting dates within DOT (Citizens Informational Workshops, Public Hearings, Board of Transportation dates)

Note: To access calendar: While in your calendar, select “Agenda” at the top and then type in “PDEA”. This will give you the “PDEA Public Meetings” calendar. Coordinate this calendar with the Human Environment Office.

7. Contact the Division Engineer for acceptable dates and determine whether the PDEA Engineer or the Division Engineer will contact the DOT Board Member.

Note: If the Division Engineer or Division Construction Engineer do not plan to attend the Scoping meeting, establish a follow-up contact date (prior to the Scoping meeting) to receive any Division comments relating to the project.

8. Contact Agency representatives, MPO/RPO (local government officials), and others who indicated they would like to attend.
9. Reserve date on DOT personnel's electronic calendars (from the list in #3) and the conference room calendar.

10. Prior to the Scoping meeting, determine the need to schedule a meeting with Roadway Design Engineers for project familiarization and exchange of ideas and/or concerns (1 to 2 weeks prior to Scoping meeting). Items necessary for this meeting may include:

- Vicinity Map
- Aerial Mosaic(s)
- USGS Quadrangle Map
- Any data regarding potential environmental concerns (i.e. historic architectural or archaeological properties, public parklands, water bodies, Natural Heritage Sites, etc.)
- Feasibility Study (if applicable)
- Traffic Projections

Note: to ensure ample time for the receipt of traffic information before the Scoping meeting, these requests should be submitted approximately six (6) months prior to meeting date.)

G. Send Scoping Memo and Final Scoping Sheets

After the meeting date is set for the Scoping meeting, send the Scoping memo to NCDOT units. Also send a memo to agency representatives who expressed a desire to attend the meeting. This memo requests specific comments from internal units and provides the meeting date, time and location. A copy of the final Scoping Information Sheets accompanies this letter (note the revised date at the top of the Scoping Sheets). The revised sheets include a current cost estimate for the project and any comments or information received from the environmental agencies. Vicinity and Quad Maps are always sent with the letters.

Note 1: Coordinate with Pam Rogers about typing this memo. She has the up-to-date template of the memo. She will merge the memos.

Note 2: Coordinate with your supervisor regarding the final list of NCDOT staff to invite. Get the official list of names from Pam.

H. Hold Scoping Meeting

1. If the meeting is held in the Transportation Building, advise the front lobby customer service representative of the Scoping meeting, date, time and location and a contact person's name and telephone number in case of questions. This will expedite security's job in allowing visitors into the building. The telephone number for the front desk is (919) 715-8156.
2. Presentation materials needed for the Scoping meeting:
 - Signs showing meeting location – post them in elevators, stairways, etc. to help those unfamiliar with the building to locate the meeting room.
 - Agenda – have copies for everyone
 - Attendance sheet
 - Notepad – have someone else take notes for you
 - English/Metric scale
 - Additional copies of Scoping packets
 - Feasibility Study (if available)
 - Traffic projections
 - TIP map showing all projects in area
 - Strategic Highway Corridor Map (if applicable)
 - Photographs of project. Use the laptop with projector if the photos will help the discussion.
 - Videotape of project (optional, depending on the nature of the project).

- Bridge inspection reports (if applicable)
 - Bridge inventories (if applicable)
 - USGS Quad Maps – these can now be overlaid onto the Aerial Mosaic
 - Environmental Features Map
 - Aerial Mosaic (see section H-3 for details)
3. Aerial mosaic:
- This is the single most important visual aid for the meeting. Make sure it's large enough and positioned so everyone can view it. Use multiple copies if necessary.
 - All major physical features should be identified, including street names, city limits, historic properties, streams, churches, etc. Show north arrow and scale.
 - Identify project termini, corridors, other key features of the project.
4. Conducting the meeting:
- Position yourself so that you and the meeting attendees can view the aerial.
 - Introduce yourself and ask the meeting attendees to do the same. Announce that everyone should sign the attendance sheet.
 - Begin the discussion by introducing the project, using the agenda.
 - Orient the meeting attendees to the aerial.
5. Information to discuss (these discussion topics can be used to develop a meeting agenda):
- Information from Scoping Information Sheets
 - Other TIP Projects in the area, including schedules
 - Existing conditions, such as:
 - Typical sections
 - Right of way
 - Structures along project
 - Signals
 - Capacity analysis
 - Access control
 - Accident data
 - Utilities
 - Sidewalks, bicycle facilities
 - Railroads
 - Hazardous materials sites
 - Airports
 - Special features
 - Deficiencies in existing transportation system.
 - Proposed design improvements that could reduce or eliminate these deficiencies
 - Widening – describe alternatives (4-lane divided, 5-lane undivided, etc).

- New location construction
 - Roadway rehabilitation
 - Structure recommendations – from Hydraulics; include discussion on road closures or detour routes
 - Signals
 - Intersection improvements
 - Environmental issues that are known at this time, such as
 - Wetlands, streams
 - Protected species
 - Cultural resources
 - Community resources
 - Comments from agencies
 - Discuss potential alternatives
 - Mitigation needed
 - Utility impacts
 - ROW needed
 - Determine if project is considered “significant” according to the new federal Work Zone Final Rule (discuss with Work Zone Safety Group)
 - Discuss constructability issues:
 - Alternative construction methods
 - Alternative contractual methods
 - Capacity and level of service during construction
 - Alternate routes and detour selection
 - Construction/ project duration
 - Discuss any special studies that will be required, such as supplemental accident reports, etc.
 - Discuss if project will go through Merger Process (if decision has not already been made).
 - Discuss document, ROW, and Let schedules as shown on the PMii system.
 - Discuss environmental documentation for the project:
 - Federal Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS, FEIS)
 - Federal Environmental Assessment (EA)
 - Federal Categorical Exclusion (CE)
 - Federal Reevaluation
 - State Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)
 - State Environmental Assessment/ Finding of No Significant Impact (SEA/FONSI)
 - State Minimum Criteria (SMC).
- Note: For federally funded project, FHWA will make final decision as to document type.***

6. Summarize recommendations from this meeting.
7. Determine what assignments will be required from others.

8. Adjourn meeting. Thank everyone for participating.

I. Distribute Meeting Minutes

After the meeting, you are responsible for compiling minutes from the meeting.

Minutes should always include:

- Who attended
- What was discussed
- Changes to the scope of work
- What assignments were given

The minutes should be sent to:

- Original Scoping List in NCDOT
- Attendees

Try to have the minutes sent out within 2 weeks of the meeting, unless additional meetings will be required to resolve major Scoping issues.